A Fundraising Letter to You From One of Our Subscribers

Dear Reader,

We have an opportunity to do a good deed and, at the same time, to give ourselves a modest and inspiring gift.

As you can well imagine, any enterprise in Ontario that has come to depend upon public subsidy feels threatened by the new provincial Conservative government. No enterprise feels more threatened than the small cultural-political literary magazine. Border/Lines is especially vulnerable.

Border/Lines is a quarterly. It has published since 1984. The magazine is run by a collective of dedicated volunteers. Its entire annual operating budget totals only $50,000.

Despite the frugal budget, Border/Lines will continue to publish it, as is likely, the Canada Arts Council is forced to cut back its grant. We would all be worse off as a result.

Border/Lines was the first magazine in Canada to focus specifically on issues relating to race, gender, and sexual orientation. It has published such leading authors as M. Norberte Philip, Michael Ignatieff, Harold Innis and Terry Eagleton.

The results have been exemplary. The Village Voice has cited the magazine more than once. The London Free Press called Border/Lines "one of the best 10 alternative magazines" published in Canada. One Reader voted Border/Lines one of the top 10 cultural affairs magazines of 1994.

Our opportunity is to help Border/Lines now, when it is needed. Add this moment in crisis. If you support Border/Lines with a financial gift, you will be making a direct contribution toward the survival of one of Canada’s most vital media for the expression of alternative voices.

Please, your tax-deductible contribution will get you a year’s subscription to Border/Lines absolutely free.

Border/Lines is important. Especially now. Without an alternative press, the level of our public discourse will degenerate and we shall all be the much more vulnerable to forces that would process us out of a single mold. Don’t miss the opportunity to help prevent this from happening. Don’t miss the opportunity to discover the vitality of Border/Lines for yourself.

Sincerely,

David Iulioberg

P.S. Again, donations are tax-deductible. Border/Lines will issue you a receipt.

---

Masculine Philosophy of Capitalism

by Clint Burnham

How discriminating among mineral waters is supposed to save Western civilization.

---

John Ralston Saul had a great deal of positive media coverage last winter when The Bouder’s Companion, his executive summary of Voltaire’s Bastards, was published by Viking. Stories in leading media: The Globe and Mail; and Toronto’s Sutton tabloid, etc.; an excerpt from the book in The Toronto Star; reviews and praise from the international center of intellectual and political power: London, New York, Washington.

The kind of heavy-duty asking intellectuals ache for praise by Brian Enright, getting into the Time Reader’s 100 smart guys list, lecturing at the University of Toronto and abroad.

I could go on at length here about how lucky Saul is two philosophical works are — how they are full of sweeping generalizations; how they contain macho boy-actor ideas of the writer as Hemingway-esque man of action; how even the fairly good analyses (of the arms trade, oil industry, and rightwing fascism on debt and cutting social programs) are, in the end, subsumed by a sneaking moralism. But I’d rather confine it, also, in terms of such external factors as Saul’s media image and his novels. In the greatest of incongruities, Saul’s work has been celebrated (and sometimes attacked) because of the very things against which he inveighs: the postmodern world of image and media.

Saul’s media events and accolades feed into each other: Vol Ralston Saul’s profile in The Globe emphasizes the Elite List, for instance, and...
Saul's critique is a form of capitalist-brush-clearing: the managers who have run business and government have screwed up, so we need real capitalists to take charge.

The print layout of Saul's article in the New York Times is a mix of justified and unjustified text. The article discusses the concept of capitalism and its role in society, critiquing the current state of business and government.

Saul's philosophical rants are little more than a liberal form of capitalism thinking out loud. His philosophy is liberal in the most polite sense of the word, suggesting that the market is a complex system that can be improved through regulation and intervention. However, his ideas are often criticized for being too idealistic and not addressing the complexities of modern society.

Saul's cosmopolitan gourmet image seamlessly supports a dismissal of pop art with an ill-thought binary: it never occurs to Saul that Warhol's art could be artificial and relevant. Saul's relentless macho image is part of how he analyzes Western political philosophy and culture. Novelist John Updike supposedly is the "deep-penetration poet," striking out where least expected (Voltaire's "Bestiary," 36-8); the manager isn't a real man, a real capitalist, but "an employee in drag" (Voltaire's "Bestiary," 385c), a rasputch, like a courrier -- in a word: feminized. Saul's critique is a form of capitalist-brush-clearing: the managers who have run business and government have screwed up, so we need real capitalists to take charge. In a chapter of Voltaire's "Bestiary," "The Neglect of Economists," the environmental and other excesses of international capitalism are blamed on the managerial class, who aren't true capitalists, but "subject administrators in a discomfiting food contamination by agriculturally chemical criminals, Saul writes. "Nothing is nearer to people's human need. However, most of the corporations involved are run by managers, not owners." (Voltaire's "Bestiary," 313.) If owners ran things, Saul argues, capitalism would be great.

Saul's critique is a form of capitalist-brush-clearing: the managers who have run business and government have screwed up, so we need real capitalists to take charge. In a chapter of Voltaire's "Bestiary," "The Neglect of Economists," the environmental and other excesses of international capitalism are blamed on the managerial class, who aren't true capitalists, but "subject administrators in a discomfiting food contamination by agriculturally chemical criminals, Saul writes. "Nothing is nearer to people's human need. However, most of the corporations involved are run by managers, not owners." (Voltaire's "Bestiary," 313.) If owners ran things, Saul argues, capitalism would be great.
Saul's critique is a form of capitalist brush-clearing: the managers who have run business and government have screwed up, so we need real capitalists to take charge.

The New York Times (Saul on Saul: "The New York Times")

Here Saul's cosopolitan gourmet image seamlessly supports a dismissal of pop art with an ill-thought binary: it never occurs to Saul that Warhol's art could be artificial and relevant. Saul's relentlessly middle-class taste is part of how he analyzes Western political philosophy and culture. Novelists are supposed to be "deep-penetration poets, striking out where least expected" (Vilhunen's Fastlands, 38–38); the manager isn't a real man, a real capitalist, "an emerald in drag" (Vilhunen's Fastlands, 353), a runt, like a counterpart — in a word: feminized.

The Guardian (Saul: "The Guardian"

Saul's philosophical rants are little more than a liberal form of capitalism thinking out loud. His philosophy is liberal in the scold-standard of the market in determining human interaction and supports some form of government regulation — although he is easily bowled when he sees the market as a reflection of reason, instead of the other way around. That is, Saul's history is as linear and ideological as it is rigid. His sharp edge comes more from the confused disburh of a class realizing how it has screwed up the system. For Saul is eminently of the class — the technocrats — he criticizes. Born into the officer corps, Saul studied as an academic in London, worked as a shocktrooper in Paris, was a senior official with the Canadian government in Calgary, and now analyses the Canadian government on cultural policy. Those are all paradigmatic occupations for the technocrat today, and while Saul repeatedly frames in his own experiences as justification for his philosophy, nowhere does he outline precisely how he's not part of the problem.

Saul's insistence on a clear and instrumental writing style is linked to his overt rationalistic mindset. For clear and direct expression as an aesthetic replicates the capitalist desire for efficiency. (He really is naive — he hasn't even caught up to the Moby Dick-style language now favored by corporate philosophers.) Saul repeatedly attacks what he sees as the glorification of postmodernism, deconstruction, and theory. Rhetoric is their ultimate tool, the sneaky cunning of speech — very well for social engineers in the U.S.